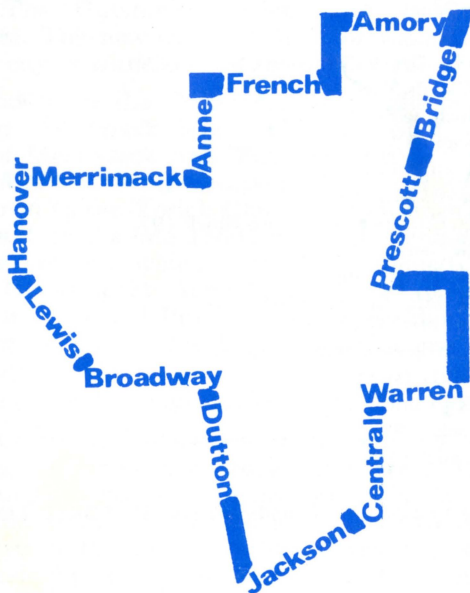


Walking Tours of LOWELL



Canals, East

LANDMARKS

Appleton Mfg. Co. (90)
Boott Mfg. Co. (10)
Linus Childs House (11)
Eastern Canal
Hamilton Canal
Hamilton Mfg. Co. (81)
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church (17)
Locks & Canals Yard (92)
Lowell Machine Shop (site)
Lower Locks (8)
Lucy Larcom Parkway
Massachusetts Mfg. Co. (51)
Mass. Mfg. Co. Boarding House Block (9)
Merrimack Canal
Merrimack Canal Gatehouse (1)
Merrimack Mfg. Co. Agent's House
(Yorick Club) (2)
Middlesex Woolen Company (site)
Prescott Mills (site)
St. Patrick's Church (18)
Swamp Locks (91)
Western Canal (15)

() refers to position of landmark on HISTORIC LOWELL map.

Mills and Canals

Eastern Walking Tour

"The Blue Tour"

Begin this tour at the *Merrimack Gatehouse* (1).

The *Merrimack Gatehouse* is also known as the *Moody Street Feeder Gatehouse*. Built in 1848 as a part of the Northern Canal project, its three sluice gates control the flow of water from the *Moody Street Feeder* into the *Merrimack Canal*. These gates are activated by a series of counterweights and are manually operated. The *Moody Street Feeder* is an underground canal consisting of three vaulted raceways (tunnels). It runs 1100 feet from the Northern Canal, under *Moody Street*, to the Gatehouse. The Gatehouse architecture is Romantic Italianate. The new-world position of the young industrial city is witnessed in this sophisticated design.

As you leave the Gatehouse turn right and continue up *Merrimack Street*. On your right, on the corner of *Merrimack* and *Dutton Streets* is the *Merrimack Manufacturing Company Agent's House* (2), now known as the *Yorick Club*, a private men's club. It was built in the late 1860's after the company had sold the rectory, which they had retained as an Agent's House, to *St. Anne's* parish. The architectural style is bracketed Italianate which, by the time of the construction of this house, had become rather conservative.

Continue on *Merrimack Street*.

The *Lowell Canal* system is an amazing accomplishment of nineteenth century engineering. Its primary purpose was to convert the thirty-two foot fall of the *Merrimack River* into power to run the machinery of the *Lowell mills*. However, this nineteenth century need was built upon an eighteenth century transportation canal.

In 1792 the Proprietors of Locks and Canals on *Merrimack River* was formed by a group of *Newburyport* merchants and financiers to construct a canal around the *Pawtucket Falls* at *East Chelmsford*. This scheme was part of a greater hope expressed by *Alexander Hamilton*, that waterways could be employed as a communications and transportation network to unite the new nation.

For the first ten years of its existence the canal did a solid business directing timber and goods from *New Hampshire* to *Newburyport*. However in 1803 the *Middlesex Canal* was opened. This marvel ran

almost thirty miles from Middlesex Village, in Chelmsford, to the Port of Boston. The Pawtucket Canal became obsolete.

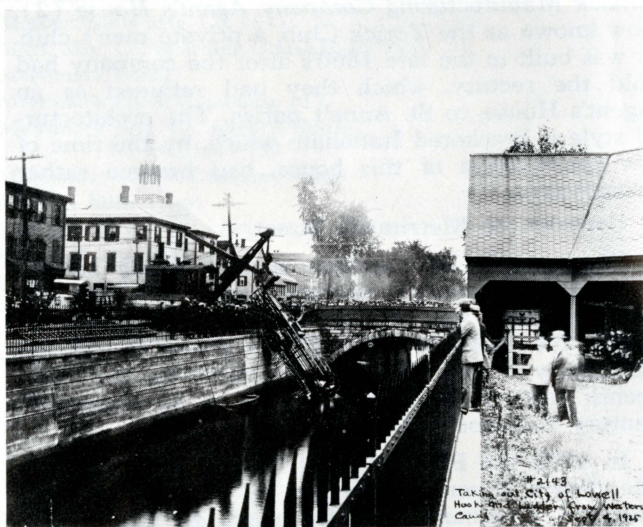
Not long after the opening of the Middlesex Canal, Francis Cabot Lowell began his experiment in textiles at Waltham. The embargo of 1812 had had a disastrous effect on American trade, and the merchants of Coastal New England were searching for new investments to re-coup their losses.

Francis Cabot Lowell combined all the operations of cotton production under a single roof, using machinery powered by water. This demonstrated the industrial potential of New England.

The Charles River in Waltham could not provide the power necessary for a truly significant experiment of major proportions. The thirty-two foot drop of the Merrimack River at East Chelmsford, however, in addition to the Middlesex Canal and the existing near-abandoned Pawtucket Canal, provided a perfect setting for the series of events that would revolutionize American society, business, and technology.

Due to the vastness of the Locks and Canals System, almost six miles in length, this tour concentrates on the eastern portion.

Turn left onto Suffolk Street.

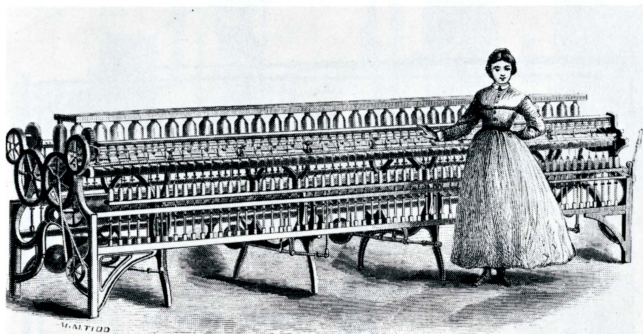


Western Canal 1925 University of Lowell

On your left is the mile long *Western Canal* (15) built in 1831. The Western was the third Lowell canal built, and powered the Suffolk, Tremont, and Lawrence Mills. Water enters from the Pawtucket Canal above the Swamp Locks.

Cross Market Street and continue on Suffolk Street, along the Western Canal.

In order to recruit necessary labor and assuage the fears of independent Yankees, the new industrialists had to create a suitable image free from the problems of the English system. Their solution was the imposition of a strict social and moral order. All workers were obliged to attend church and live in company maintained boarding houses. No theater or other corrupting influence was allowed in the new town. As one author noted in 1848:



Operative & Spinning Frame c. 1850 Lowell Museum

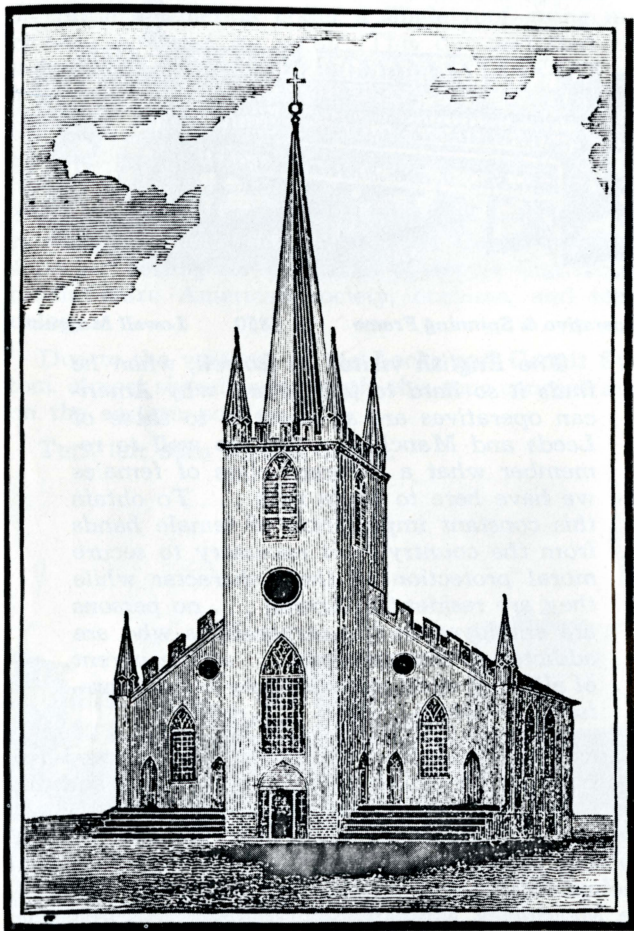
The English visitor to Lowell, when he finds it so hard to understand why American operatives are so superior to those of Leeds and Manchester, will do well to remember what a different class of females we have here to begin with . . . To obtain this constant importation of female hands from the country, it is necessary to secure moral protection of their character while they are resident in Lowell . . . no persons are employed in the corporations who are addicted to intemperance . . . as the parent of all other vices, intemperance is most carefully excluded.

This careful social ordering had not allowed for day laborers. Workers to construct the mills and dig the canals or service the community in the most menial tasks were needed. In 1821, a group of Irish laborers walked along the Middlesex Canal to East Chelmsford. They were met by Kirk Boott, Agent of the Merrimack Mills, who hired them to widen the existing Pawtucket Canal. They were joined by others and were given an acre of land to the west of the Town to settle, the area where you are now standing. Gradually this entire section came to be known as "the Acre". One historian later noted:

"There stood an Irish village with real Irish cabins, and shanties built of boards, sods, and muds — such as can be seen in Ballyshannon, if any of the Lowell people happen to go there. Outside were the chimneys, built in a half circle, of paving stone, topped

out with flour-barrels, for the smoke and for ventilation. Each cabin had its piggery attached to its side . . .”

The townspeople backhandedly referred to this area as “New Dublin” or “Paddy camps”. Police would patrol this area in special wagons picking up inebriated or fighting Irish, hence the term “paddy wagon”.



St. Patrick's Church 1831 City of Lowell

On your right is *St. Patrick's Church* (18), built in 1854 to replace an earlier wooden one burned to the ground by the Yankee “natives”.

Across the canal, on your left, is the *Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church* (17). Holy Trinity Church was built by the Greek community in 1908, and the design is a free interpretation, by the Lowell architect Henry Rourke, of St. Sophia of Istanbul.



Holy Trinity Church c. 1912 City of Lowell

Successive waves of immigrant groups followed the Irish. Greeks began arriving in the 1890's in large numbers. The paternalism of the Lowell mills had slowly died and the corporations were quick to exploit each newly-arriving immigrant group. One social historian's comments exhibit attitudes held of all ethnic groups of the time:

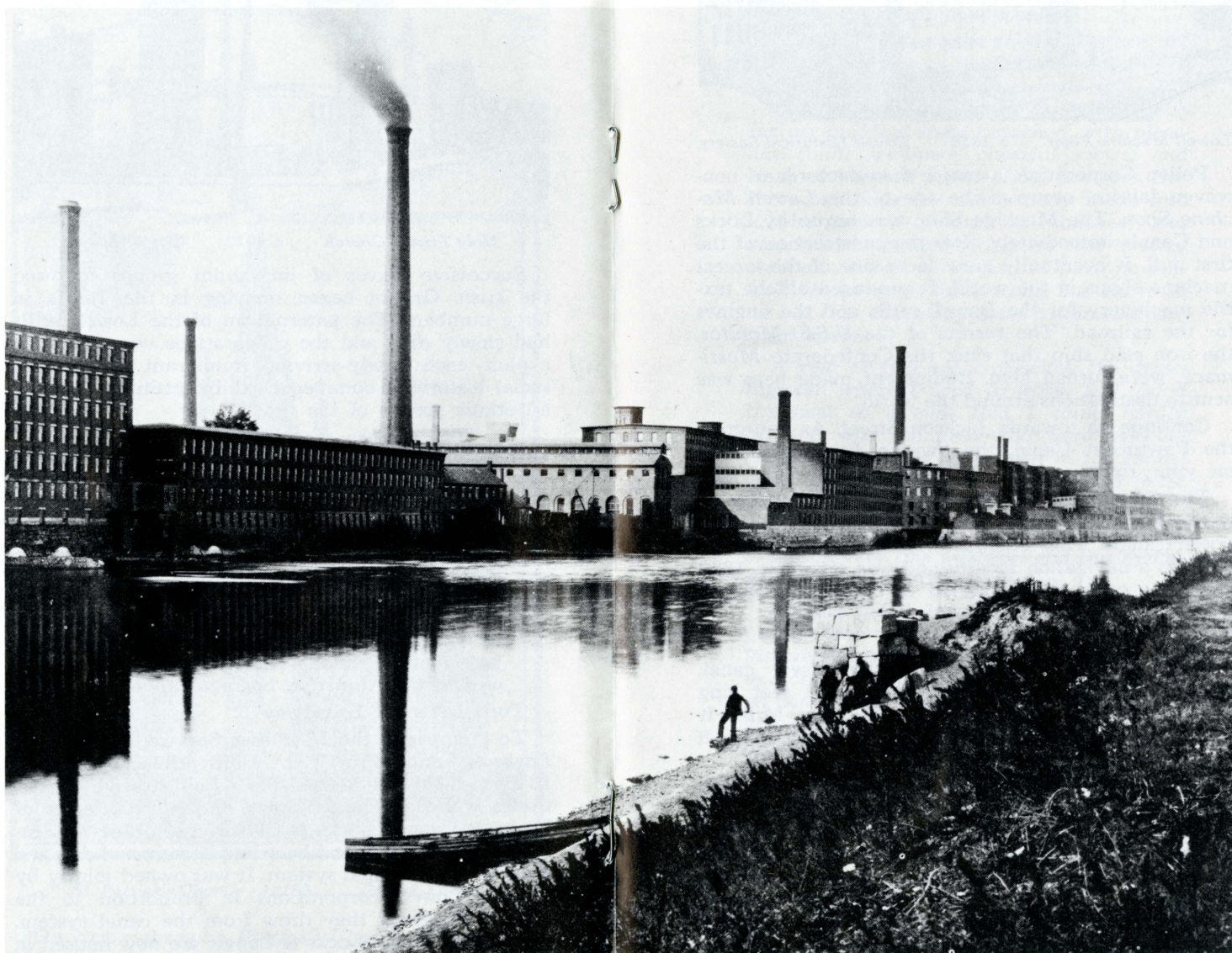
"The Greeks are in general, law-abiding people. They are addicted to gambling with cards, and much of this is carried on in hidden ways, in the numerous coffee-houses, and the police make occasional arrests. The absence of home restraints and family ties leads to sexual vice. Loyalty to their own native towns and districts leads to feuds and rivalries, and cases of assault and battery are not infrequent. Drunkenness is not yet common among them, though tendencies in that direction begin to appear."

Turn left onto Broadway.

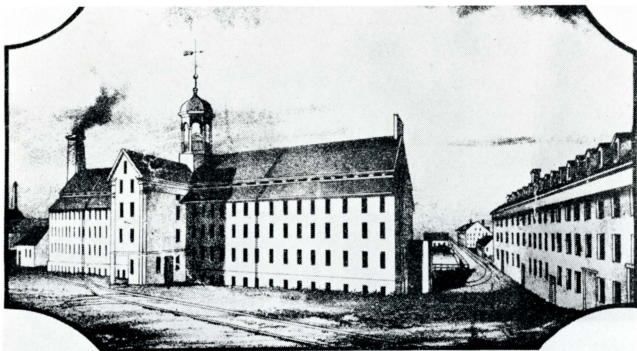
To your right, the Macheras Service Mart, is the *Locks & Canals Yard* (92). Built primarily between 1845 and 1880 it housed the administrative offices, trades workshops and library of the Proprietors of Locks & Canals. Locks & Canals assembled real estate, built the mills and boarding houses, and dug and maintained the canal system. It was owned jointly by all the Lowell corporations in proportion to the amount of power they drew from the canal system. The offices of the Locks & Canals are now housed in the Boott Mills.

Turn right onto Dutton Street, cross Dutton Street and the Merrimack Canal into the Pellon Corporation.

NOTE: The railroad tracks are on the original right-of-way of the Boston & Lowell R.R., the first railroad in the Northeast and second in the nation.



Mile of Mills c. 1900 Lowell Historical Society



Lowell Machine Shop c. 1850 Lowell Historical Society

Pellon Corporation, a major manufacturer of non-woven fabrics, occupies the site of the *Lowell Machine Shop*. The Machine Shop was begun by Locks and Canals immediately after the construction of the first mill. It eventually grew to be one of the largest machine shops in the world. It produced all the textile machinery for the Lowell mills and the engines for the railroad. The turrets of the *U.S.S. Monitor*, the iron clad ship that sank the Confederate *Merri-mack*, were turned here. Equipment made here was sent to destinations around the world.

Continue on towards Jackson Street. As you cross the Pawtucket Canal, the *Swamp Locks* (91) are on your right.

The Swamp Locks and dam control the flow of water from the upper Pawtucket Canal into five power canals. This site was originally constructed in 1792 as a navigation facility and was rebuilt in 1822 when the canal was modified for power as well as transportation.

Turn left onto Jackson Street.

The *Hamilton Canal*, the second power canal, built in 1825, is on your left. It is 1,771 feet long and powered the Hamilton and Appleton Mills. It re-enters the Pawtucket Canal by raceways through the mills.

The *Appleton Mills* (90), are to your left, and right. Those on the left were built in 1873 on the site of the company boarding houses. Those on the right, on the island between the Hamilton and Pawtucket Canals, were rebuilt in the first decade of the twentieth century. Uriah A. Boyden's turbine water wheel was first used in the Appleton Mills. The Appleton Corporation, one of the first to leave Lowell, is now located in Anderson, South Carolina.

Next to the Appleton Mills, on your left, are the *Hamilton Mills* (81). This was the second textile manufacturer in Lowell. The company went bankrupt in 1926, one hundred years after their founding. Containing one of Lowell's most attractive mill yards, the Hamilton complex was built in 1828 and rebuilt

in 1881-1883. The original free standing Greek Revival mills, which can still be discerned, were enlarged and connected in the Romanesque style favored by the corporation.

As the mills increased in size and productivity, concern for the workers decreased and the early paternalism subsided. Harriet Robinson, an early mill girl noted the decline in conditions:

"The cotton-factories themselves are not so agreeable nor so healthful to work in as they used to be. Once they were light, well ventilated, and moderately heated; each factory-building stood detached, with pleasant sunlit windows, cheerful views, and fresh air from all points of the compass. But these buildings are now usually made into a solid mass by connecting "annexes", and often form a hollow square, so that at least one-half of the operatives can have no outlook except upon brick walls, and no fresh air but that which circulates within this confined space.

A year or two ago I revisited the dressingroom where I used to work, and found the heat so intense that I could hardly breathe; and the men who were working there (there were no women in the room) wore the scantiest of clothing, and were covered with perspiration.

. . . the windows and doors are kept shut, except in very fine weather; and this makes an atmosphere unfit to breathe.

Nor are the houses kept clean and in repair as they used to be. In Lowell, when I last walked among the "blocks" where I lived as a child, I found them in a most dilapidated condition, — houses going to decay, broken sidewalks, and filthy streets; and contrasting their appearance with that of the "corporation" as I remember it, . . .

Turn left onto Central Street, and right onto Warren Street. Proceed one block to the Smith parking lot.

Turn left and walk along the perimeter of the parking lot to the foot bridge over the Pawtucket Canal.

The Smith parking lot occupies the site of the Middlesex Woolen Company. The only Lowell corporation not producing cotton cloth, the Middlesex Company was plagued by bad management. They drew only auxiliary power from the Locks & Canals system, the bulk of their power needs being met by their own dam on the Concord River. The mills were razed by the City in 1959.

As you cross the Pawtucket Canal the *Lower Locks* (8) are on your left. These locks were originally built in 1792. They were rebuilt in 1822 along with a dam. This is the final drop on the Pawtucket Canal.

Continue to the Rex Lot. Originally the *Prescott Mills* stood on this site. Founded in 1843 they were absorbed by the Massachusetts Mills in 1844.

Turn right and cross the foot-bridge over the Eastern Canal. The *Eastern Canal* was built in 1835. It is 1,913 feet long. At one point its flow runs opposite to the Merrimack River. The dam at the Lower Locks forces water into the Eastern Canal, which powered the Boott, Massachusetts, and Prescott Mills.

Turn right onto Prescott Street. Cross Merrimack Street to Bridge Street.

Further ahead on your left, at the corner of Bridge and Paige Streets, is a *Massachusetts Boarding House Block* (9), built in 1838 in the Federal style. The boarding house was an integral part of the early social system. Henry Miles, writing ten years after the construction of this block noted:

Each of the long blocks of boarding-houses is divided into six or eight tenements, and are generally three stories high. These tenements are finished off in a style much above the common farmhouses of the country, and more nearly resemble the abodes of respectable mechanics in rural villages. They are all furnished with an abundant supply of water, and with suitable yards and out-buildings. These are constantly kept clean, the buildings well painted, and the premises thoroughly whitewashed every spring, at the Corporation's expense. The front room is usually the common eating-room of the house and the kitchen in the rear. The keeper of the house, (commonly a widow with her family of children) has her parlor in some part of the establishment; and in some places there is a sitting room for the use of the boarders. The remainder of the apartments are sleeping-rooms. In each of these are lodged two, four, and in some cases six boarders; and the room has an air of neatness and comfort, exceeding what most of the occupants have been accustomed to in their paternal homes . . . As one important feature in the management of these houses, it deserves to be named that male operatives and female operatives do not board in the same tenement; and the following Regulations, printed by one of the companies, and given to

each keeper of their houses, are here sub-joined, as a simple statement of the rules generally observed by all the Corporations.

"Regulations to be observed by persons occupying the boarding houses belonging to the Merrimack Manufacturing Company.

They must not board people not employed by the company unless by special permission.

No disorderly or improper conduct must be allowed in the houses.

The doors must be closed at 10 o'clock in the evening; and no person admitted after that time, unless a sufficient excuse can be given.

Those who keep the houses, when required, must give an account of the number, names, and employment of their boarders; also with regard to their general conduct, and whether they are in the habit of attending public worship.

The buildings, both inside and out, and the yards about them, must be kept clean and in good order. If the buildings or fences are injured, they will be repaired and charged to the occupant.

No one will be allowed to keep swine."

The large block on the next corner was originally a Boott Mills Boarding House Block. It was substantially altered in the 1890's when the corporation sold off most of their boarding house holdings.



Mass. Mfg. Co. c. 1850 Lowell Historical Society

On your right is the yard of the *Massachusetts Mills* (51), built in 1838. This yard was rebuilt in the 1850's.

Turn left, cross Bridge Street, and follow the Eastern Canal (along the railroad tracks). On your right is the *Boott Mills* (10).

The Boott Mills were built in 1835 and named for Kirk Boott, first Agent of the Merrimack Mills, and dictatorial founding father of Lowell. The area in front of the mills and to your right was the site of their boarding houses. Henry Miles best explains their physical layout and social order:

On the banks of the river, or of a canal, stands a row of mills numbering on different corporations, from two to five. A few rods from these, are long blocks of brick boarding-houses, containing a sufficient number of tenements to accommodate the most of the operatives employed by the Corporation. Between the boarding-houses and the mills is a line of one-story brick buildings, containing the counting room, superintendent's room, clerk's and store rooms. The mill yard is so surrounded by enclosures, that the only access is through the counting room, in full view of those whose business it is to see that no improper persons intrude themselves upon the premises. Thus the superintendent, from his room, has the whole of the Corporation under his eye. On the one side are the boarding-houses, all of which are under his care, and are rented only to known and approved tenants; on the other side are the mills, in each room of which he has stationed some carefully selected overseer, who is held responsible for the work, good order, and proper management of his room.

The Boott Mills are one of the finest existing examples of nineteenth century industrial architecture. The original buildings of 1835 were enlarged and connected in 1863. Other structures in the courtyard are from the 1890's. The original design was Greek Revival and Federal. The 1863 work was in the Romanesque style. Outstanding is the sculptural Romantic bell and clock tower.

Turn left onto John Street and right onto French Street.

The *Linus Childs House* (11) is on your left, on the corner of Kirk and French Streets. Built in 1835, one half was the residence of the Agent of the Boott Mills; and the other housed the Agent of the Massachusetts Mills. The style is basically Federal with Greek Revival ornament.

The large structure on your right is the Cotton House of the Boott Mills, now a warehouse, and attached to it is a fragment of boarding house block.

Turn left after the High School into *Lucy Larcom Park* and follow the Merrimack Canal back to the Gatehouse.



Lucy Larcom Lowell Historical Society

Lucy Larcom, the mill girl poetess, striving like so many other working women, to improve herself wrote:

"I knew I should write; I could not help doing that, for my hand seemed instinctively to move towards pen and paper in moments of leisure. But to write anything worthwhile, I must have mental cultivation; so, in preparing myself to teach, I could also be preparing myself to write.

This was the plan that indefinitely shaped itself in my mind as I returned to work in the spinning room . . . to learn all I could, so that I should be fit to teach or write, as the way opened."

The Merrimack Canal was built in 1822 to power the Merrimack Manufacturing Company, the first mill built in Lowell. The mills stood at the head of the canal where the high-rise apartments are now located. It was the first canal built after the reconstruction of the Pawtucket Canal and begins at the Swamp Locks Basin. It is 2,586 feet long.

Return to the Merrimack Gatehouse.



This tour was made available through a grant from the Massachusetts Bicentennial Commission and an appropriation from the Hapood Wright Centennial Fund by the Lowell Bicentennial/Sesquicentennial Commission. It was developed by Joseph R. Orfant, a graduate of Yale and former employee of the City Development Authority. He served as secretary of the Lowell Historical Commission and is presently employed as the National Register Editor for the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

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